

TITLE: Stars on the Wall

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VOLUME: 35 ISSUE: Fall YEAR: 1991

STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

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~~Secret~~*A lasting tribute*

Stars on the Wall

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*As part of its introduction to the CIA, Career Trainee Class [] was split into syndicate groups to research and write a short article on some aspect of the Agency. As new employees, one group was interested in the Memorial Wall and the people that are represented by the stars. Who were they? How, where, and when did they die? Who selected the honorees and how? Why did so many employees know so little about who had come before them? This group set out to answer these and other questions, and this article is based on its findings.**

CIA has many ways to recognize and reward dedicated service, including intelligence medals and distinguished service awards. To honor those who have died in the line of duty, the Agency has established memorials. The most visible is the Memorial Wall in the main foyer of the Original Headquarters Building. Another is the "Air America" plaque, which honors CIA employees who died in East and Southeast Asia.

Background

In February 1973, the Honor and Merit Awards Board (HMAB) received a proposal to honor Agency employees who died while serving in Southeast Asia. The following month, the HMAB broadened this concept by approving a memorial dedicated to all Agency employees who lose their lives on duty. The Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) concurred, and the Agency's Fine Arts

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Commission (FAC) was tasked to develop plans for a memorial. Using the Department of State's memorial to its fallen employees as a model, the Agency developed the concept and selection criteria for the tribute.

The HMAB submitted its proposal to DCI Colby in an 11 March 1974 memorandum. Director Colby approved the memorandum, as well as a list of 31 employees who had died since the Agency's founding in 1947. The wall in the main foyer of the Original Headquarters Building, which faces the statue of General William Donovan, was selected as the site for the memorial. The inscription subsequently chiseled into the marble wall reads:

In honor of those members of the Central Intelligence Agency who gave their lives in the service of their country

In lieu of the names of the deceased, which the Department of State lists on its memorial, stars were used to symbolize each honoree. A glass-encased "Book of Honor" also was placed beneath these stars. The book contains either the names of the deceased or a star representing a covert employee. As cover restrictions ease, more names may be authorized for inclusion in the book. The Agency and US flags flank the stars.

At a Glance

By the Fall of 1991, 23 additional stars had been added to the wall, bringing the total number of honorees to 54. Ninety-four percent of those memorialized are men. Women are represented by three stars.

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tandem couple is also represented; both died in the same incident. Unlike the Department of State, the CIA does honor contractors in the memorial.

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The Directorate of Operations (DO) has suffered (b)(3)(c) the largest number of fatalities, [redacted] Because DO employees work in a variety of situations around the world, their personal sacrifices take many forms. [redacted]

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William F. Buckley, Chief of Station in Beirut, was (b)(3)(c) kidnaped and died at the hands of his captors in (b)(3)(n) 1985. [redacted]

Buckley's Agency affiliation was well publicized in both the US and foreign press. Consequently, cover restrictions regarding placement of his name in the Book of Honor were lifted.

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Robert C. Ames, who died in the bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut in 1983. Ames, a longtime DO careerist, was on TDY in Beirut as Director of [redacted]

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On a corner pillar overlooking the main courtyard of the Original Headquarters Building is a memorial plaque dedicated to the pilots and employees of Civil Air Transport (CAT), Air America, Air Asia, and Southern Air Transport (SAT) who died in Asia between 1947 and 1975. Friends and family of the deceased also have dedicated another plaque, in the McDermott Library at the University of Texas at Dallas, which lists them by name.

These employees died while flying food and medicine into besieged areas, which often were military targets. In several countries, flights also evacuated persons fleeing advancing communist armies. The dedication of the pilots flying these hazardous missions was matched by their highly skilled maintenance and ground crews.

CAT, the original organization, operated refugee and resupply flights from 1947 to 1950 in support of Chiang Kai-shek's forces on the Chinese mainland. During the Korean War, when the US needed an air transport operation, the CIA purchased CAT. SAT operated under US Government contract from Japan, providing mostly administrative and "R and R" flights for military personnel in East Asia

during the 1950s. Air Asia was originally organized to service SAT; by the 1970s, it had grown into the largest aircraft maintenance facility in East Asia.

Air America was established after the Korean War and operated under US Government contract. As the Vietnam conflict escalated, Air America's role in Southeast Asia expanded. Bases were established in major cities and in remote areas to support a variety of services, including the training of local national employees.

Although the majority of employees during the early years were former Flying Tigers, future employees were recruited from all branches of the armed services, as well as from several civilian sources. Over the years, each of these organizations had employees who were captured, declared missing, or died while serving their country. The last US helicopter that left the roof of the US Embassy in Saigon on 29 April 1975 was flown by an Air America pilot.

On Memorial Day 1988, DCI Webster dedicated the memorial to the men and women "who died while serving the cause of freedom in Asia."

the DI's Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Ames's alma mater, La Salle College, dedicated a plaque in his memory, and it is on permanent display in the Agency's Exhibit Rooms.

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Even though the majority of honorees have died while carrying out a mission, at least (b)(3)(c) deaths have occurred in personal residences and were

attributed to an intruder or a terrorist. The most publicized case was the one involving Richard S. Welch, Chief of Station in Athens. Just before Christmas in 1975, Welch was gunned down in front of his home by unknown assailants. Some believe that the murder of Welch was facilitated by the exposure of his Agency affiliation in *Inside the Company*, a book by turncoat CIA officer Philip Agee.

Where and How

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No fatalities represented on the Wall occurred in what was once known as the Soviet Bloc.

The causes of death can be grouped into four categories:

- Accidents
- Deliberate violent acts, including executions, murders, and terrorist attacks
- Military conflicts
- Health

After 1975, the number of military deaths dropped off. Concurrently, fatalities due to accidents and deliberate violent acts rapidly increased and replaced military conflicts as the leading cause of death up to this day.

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The Nomination Process

Any employee who believes that the service of a fallen colleague deserves to be recognized with a star can submit a request to the Awards Panel in his or her Office. The request should clearly state the circumstances surrounding the death. If the panel concurs, the Office director sponsors the nomination and submits it to the directorate's Honor Board. With this Board's approval, the respective deputy director writes a memorandum to the DCI, submitted via the HMAB, requesting

that a memorial star be placed on the Wall. The HMAB has to receive the nomination within five years of the employee's death. Usually, however, requests are received within a few months of the death.

The Board

The HMAB is composed of seven members. Each directorate, including the DCI's Staff is represented. The Director of Personnel acts as the chairman, and the Chief of Protocol is the secretary. Board members are appointed by their respective directorates for a one-year term, but most generally serve much longer. One DI representative remained a Board member for nearly 10 consecutive years. The members are usually employees with extensive operational experience, and they are part of the Senior Intelligence Service.

The Board normally meets once a month, when it discusses nominations for intelligence medals and placement of stars on the Memorial Wall. The only nominations which the Board does not review are those for the Intelligence Commendation Medal and the Career Intelligence Medal, both of which are under the purview of the directorates' deputy directors. The Board reviews each submitted nomination, and it either accepts or denies them by majority vote. While the chairman votes only when a tie exists, the secretary never votes. Occasionally, members are polled by telephone in response to a nomination request.

While nominations for the Memorial Wall usually are made by memorandum from the deceased's home office or directorate to the HMAB, medal award nominations are made on Form 600 (edition date 1-90). There is no limit to the number of times either the Memorial Wall memorandum or Form 600 can be resubmitted to the HMAB.

Selection Criteria

The HMAB approves the nomination, if it meets the following selection criteria stipulated in an

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11 March 1974 HMAB memorandum to the DCI. The stated criteria are:

- Agency employees who lose their lives while serving their country in the field of intelligence would be eligible for consideration.
- Employees may be either in a staff or contractual relationship.
- Death may occur either abroad or in the US; the circumstances of death, however, have to be of an inspirational or heroic character.
- The death has to have occurred on or after 18 September 1947, the founding date of the CIA.

Because of cover and security concerns, no star can be placed on the Wall within one year after the death of the nominee. Upon approval, the Board writes a memorandum to the DCI requesting his concurrence. The DCI has never rejected a recommendation. The approved memorandum is then forwarded to the Office of Protocol, which coordinates the addition of the new star and informs the FAC of the approval. The FAC determines the exact line and row on the Wall where the star will be placed. One year later, the Commission hires a contractor to cut the star into the Wall, and adds either a name or star to the Book of Honor. Recently, it has cost \$700 to add one honoree to the memorial.

If the Board rejects a nomination, the nominee may receive another award posthumously. The

HMAB has to inform the nominating directorate of the reasons for the rejection. The directorate has the right to resubmit the nominating memorandum, if it can satisfy the Board's stated concerns.

Since the Memorial's inception, the HMAB has not had any problems interpreting the criteria, with the exception of the one that requires that circumstances of a death have to be of "inspirational or heroic character." The Board seems to accept the Department of State's interpretation of this particular criteria by not considering any death which results from pestilence, disease, earthquakes, or automobile and airplane crashes of a "routine" nature. The current Board has agreed not to change the selection criteria, and it will continue to discuss each nomination on a case-by-case basis.

A Reminder

Discussion of these facts and statistics about the Memorial Wall should never obscure the reality that each star represents a lost parent, child, spouse, or friend. Frequently, recognition of the type of work they performed in support of our national goals cannot be made public. The Wall thus is a constant reminder of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and of the risks inherent in the profession of intelligence.

~~This article is classified SECRET.~~

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